

A Brazilian Promise

Dilma Rousseff, Brazil's leading candidate for the Oct. 3 presidential elections for the ruling Workers Party, and former minister for energy and Cabinet chief of the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva government, writes exclusively for TerraViva on uniquely Brazilian achievements - with promise of more to come



Roberto Stuckert Filho

Dilma Rousseff

BRASILIA: Ahead of schedule, Brazil was able to reach its poverty-reduction target established under the Millennium Development Goals. Public policies leading towards a country without misery were vigorously implemented in the last eight years, based on a plan to ensure economic development with social inclusion.

For the first time in many decades, economic growth and distribution of wealth began to walk hand in hand, and today we total 28 million people who have left extreme poverty behind, and another 29 million who have ascended to join the middle class.

But there is still much to be done. We are absolutely convinced that

achieving developed nation status requires eradicating misery and demands that all Brazilian women and men have access to conditions that guarantee dignity and citizenship.

Overcoming the historic wounds of poverty and inequality also requires an international convergence of forces that are more favourable to changes of this nature. That is why we are convinced that Brazil's new political relationship with the rest of the world is another side of this social transformation.

This is a commitment that we will continue to pursue in the coming years. A new global geopolitics must respond to today's international challenges - victory over poverty and inequality, as well as achieving an environmentally sustainable development model are among those challenges.

We know that there is no peace without economic and social development. Because of what our country has accomplished in the recent past and for the position it holds in the present, Brazil has an enormous contribution to make to the future of the planet.



Berniece Johnson

Early motherhood in Liberia: despite the introduction of free and compulsory primary education, many girls face discrimination, sexual violence, early pregnancy and forced marriage.

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At a graduation ceremony

Dr Doolittle's At Home

Zofeen Ebrahim

KARACHI: Sana Yasir toiled through medical school five years to become a doctor, and followed up with a year's clinical practice. And then, she got married and quit the workplace. As with Yasir, so with many in Pakistan.

That means Pakistan could rapidly run short of doctors. Pakistan's current doctor-patient ratio is about 1:100. In rural areas it can be as high as 1:600-900, says Dr Omar Farooq, pro-vice chancellor of the Dow University of Health Sciences and principal of Sindh Medical College. For every one specialist, says Farooq, there are 14,000 patients.

"If female students, who form a majority of graduates every year, decide not to continue with studies, and the cream of male students leave for greener pastures, in less than 10 years there will be a severe shortage of doctors," he says. "Fifty percent of the female medical students don't practise after graduating, especially if they get married."

"Of the 50 percent who do," he says, "25 percent often quit once they have kids. Only 12 to 13 percent of the women go for specialisation."

Since medical schools began implementing open-merit admissions, more women have been able to pursue medical degrees. Today women make up about 75

percent to 80 percent of Pakistan's medical graduates.

"It's either the husband who frowns upon night shifts or discourages his wife from keeping long hours that results in young graduates resigning," says Dr Mariam Waqas. "A vast majority" of the women who graduated with her seven years ago are currently unemployed by choice, she says. "These were really promising, bright young women."

Nashrah Abdul Haq, a final-year student at Dow Medical College, says it is unfair that female medical students are expected to work after they finish their studies. "It should be (their) choice. Many girls from other professional colleges opt not to work, too. Why single out female doctors?"

They have the education - about three-quarters of medical graduates are women. But then half choose not to work

Haq, 24, also does not believe that ending the open-merit system would give male students a better chance of admission to medical school and eventually lead to a better doctor-patient ratio. "Few boys are opting for medical studies. And those who do want to go abroad in any case."

Tap Nature for Better Coffee

Milagros Salazar

PUTINA PUNCO: It's Saturday and the women hurry in to the cooperative's warehouse in this rural town in southeastern Peru carrying huge bags of coffee beans on their backs.

It's a proud burden. Indigenous men and women in this region of Peru produce beans that won an award this year for the best specialty coffees.

The Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) selected the Tunki beans grown by Wilson Sucaticona, a young farmer from Putina Punco, as one of the nine best coffees of the year at the Roasters Guild Coffees of the Year competition. Tunki coffee was also picked for the London coffee fair.

The success has grown out of harmonizing with nature, and with support from the U.S.-based Conservation International, which promotes sustainable practices among coffee farmers in Peru's Upper Tambopata valley to the north of Lake Titicaca.

The quality of the beans improved as the farmers adopted measures ensuring sustainable production of fair trade coffee. And to help obtain international certification of the coffee, CECOVASA, the organisation of coffee-growers cooperatives in the Sandia Valleys, began to promote gender equality as well. As a result, 30 percent of the 5,000 cooperative members are now women.

Maria Ramos, 56, previously headed CECOVASA's women's development committee, of which she is now vice-president.

Ramos has been used to hard work since the age of seven, when her father taught her to pick coffee beans. She has spent more than three decades producing coffee without artificial fertilisers, and has won two regional awards. In December, her beans were among the winners of the Cupping for Quality competition featuring Rainforest Alliance-certified coffees.

Ramos, like other coffee farmers in the area, followed the advice she was given to plant timber-yielding trees on her farm to reforest damaged land and provide shade for the coffee bushes. The fertiliser she uses comes from kitchen vegetable waste, the outer fruit of the coffee beans, and the feces of the guinea pigs she raises. She uses no chemical products.

Everything on the farm is recycled, everything is neat and orderly, and just about everything is green, except the ripe coffee beans, which are bright red. "We have to care for the environment, for the sake of everyone's lives," Ramos says.



Inocencia Chipana shows off her coffee beans.

Women Marching in Step

Mohamed Fofanah

FREETOWN: A woman took position alongside male soldiers at the graveside of a fallen colleague. She positioned her AK47 on her shoulder, and on command fired into the grey sky with the others. Mariatu Sesay became at that moment the first woman in the Sierra Leone army to take part in a 21-gun salute to honour a dead soldier.

Onlookers were not used to seeing women in such a role. Yet women are becoming a more common sight in the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), after a gender policy introduced to ensure equal opportunities, with support from the Accra-based women, peace and security network WISPEN and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Sierra Leone is a patriarchal society where women and girls are subjected to structural discrimination by practice, custom and law. The subjugation of women was worsened by the 1991-2002 war and its aftermath. A 2004 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) noted the army's role in the systematic rape of women and girls as a strategy to sow terror.

But it is a changed army now. "We are breaking the boundaries and barriers that limit our women in the RSLAF," Chief of Defence Staff, Brigadier-General Robert Yira Koroma tells TerraViva. Koroma said the army has brought in flexible standards so women can clear the physical recruitment processes.

"We have initially sent seven female soldiers to Darfur under the UN peacekeeping operations. For the next deployment we have prepared 20 female soldiers to be sent to Darfur. This I think is phenomenal, given the fact that it has never happened in the



Women step into a male domain in Sierra Leone.

history of our army," Col. Michael Samura, in charge of personnel said. And Koroma says there are now four female platoon commanders.

There are an estimated 300 women in the army, in a total troop strength of 8,500, says Col. Michael Samura. And they are stepping further and further

The RSLAF is also putting a conducive workplace environment in place. "We have instituted a board to handle sexual harassment complaints," says Gen. Koroma. "We have also established a board responsible for promotion so no officer will be able to victimise any soldier, especially female soldiers. There is a chain of redress, so any soldier could exhaust this chain to seek relief."

The big challenge is recruitment. "There is still the problem of getting quality women to apply for the army," says Gen. Koroma. "A large proportion of women in this country are uneducated, but the army cannot lower its standards in order to absorb more women." The educational requirement is a basic school certificate. A senior secondary school certificate is required for officer posts.

Brigadier-General Kestoria Kabia, who is the first female combatant brigadier-general in the sub-region, tells TerraViva "we are trying to get as many women as possible who are interested in the army to join the force and also see to it that those who are already in the army operate under favourable conditions and are not discriminated against in any form, structurally or otherwise."

Kabia said that during the Sierra Leone civil war women volunteers

entered the male-dominated army and fought alongside men. These women proved their mettle, and so now male soldiers have little difficulty accepting the female soldiers. "We have not been having any trouble or significant challenges in implementing the gender policy in the army," she said.

Besides a woman brigadier-general, the army has four women platoon commanders

Josephine Thompson Shaw, truth and reconciliation officer at the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, says the army's gender policy would encourage other sectors, especially government, to implement recommendations for a 30 percent quota for women in all public entities.

Gender Justice Key to MDG Progress

Inés Alberdi *

With five years remaining to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the 2010 MDG Summit challenges world leaders everywhere to commit to actions to accelerate progress. A UNIFEM briefing, excerpted from its forthcoming report on women's access to justice, points to key areas where such actions are critical.

It shows that despite promising progress on many of the MDG targets, national averages mask large disparities in terms of gender, income and location, with large numbers of women and girls being left behind, especially in rural areas.

Gender justice entails ending the inequalities between women and men in the family, the community, the market and the state. It also requires that mainstream institutions – from justice to economic policymaking – are accountable for tackling the injustice and discrimination.

The briefing identifies four critical areas where action is essential: expanding women-friendly public services; increasing women's leadership, voice and influence in society; strengthening women's access to employment and livelihood opportunities; and ending violence against women and girls.

Ensuring universal access to services is vital to efforts to eliminate hunger, expand education, reduce maternal and child mortality, improve



Inés Alberdi

reproductive health and stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. Inequalities in access to services impede progress on the MDGs. People living in rural areas are at a marked disadvantage, because poverty rates are higher and access to services and markets are lower. Removing user fees, providing educational stipends and ensuring safe and reliable transport have been shown to increase access to education and health care and reduce infant mortality. Employing more female service providers has been shown to increase women's use of services and offer positive role models for girls.

Women's participation is essential to gender-responsive governance. Where women's voices are heard, policies better reflects their lives; where under-representation persists, their interests are repeatedly ignored.

Globally, women's share of parliamentary seats averages 19 percent and women occupy 16 percent of ministerial posts, primarily in the social sectors. Stronger action is needed to increase women's leadership not only in elected office, but in economic policy-making, agricultural and rural development, peace negotiations and many other fields. The most effective way to do this is through special temporary measures, including quotas; of the 29 countries that have reached or exceeded the 30 percent benchmark for women in parliament, at least 24 have used quotas.

Increasing economic opportunities for women underpins gender justice and propels progress towards the MDGs; increasing women's employment and earnings is associated with reduced poverty and faster growth, better education and health outcomes for families and children and less rapid spread of HIV/AIDS.

Yet gender discrimination persists. In every sector women have fewer opportunities, less job security and lower pay than men. In rural areas, the vast majority of women earn their livelihoods in small scale agriculture, lacking secure land access, agricultural services or credit.

The MDG Summit draft outcome document emphasizes that investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity and sustained economic growth. It includes commitments to increase women's

access to decent work, close wage gaps, and other investments, especially for rural women.

Violence against women and girls is widespread and persistent in all countries, retarding progress on all the MDGs. Cost estimates of such violence to public budgets and lost productivity also run into billions of dollars each year.

The draft outcome document commits to strengthening comprehensive laws, policies and programmes to combat violence against women and girls. These provide a solid basis on which to move forward, in line with the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE Campaign to End Violence Against Women, particularly at country level.

A key goal of the UNiTE campaign is to increase resources for the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which supports actions to combat violence against women and girls to \$100 million annually by 2015.

The creation of UN Women, a strengthened and consolidated UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment, by the General Assembly this year is an indication that the political will is there. Strong political and financial support for UN Women by countries around the world will send a strong message that the world is ready to match commitment with investment.

* Executive Director, UNIFEM (part of UN Women)



UNIFEM launches "Gender Justice: Key to Achieving the Millennium Development Goals" at the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The briefing is an excerpt from UNIFEM's forthcoming report Progress of the World's Women 2010/11 to be released in December. It focuses on

women's access to justice, pointing to four areas where urgent action is needed to accelerate progress towards the MDGs and achieving gender justice.

These are:

- Expanding women-friendly public services
- Guaranteeing land and jobs for women

- Increasing women's voice in decision-making
- Ending violence against women and girls

The Brief will be presented during the UNIFEM event World's Women at the Centre of Achieving the MDGs, 17.00-19.00 PM, 20 September 2010 in Conference Room #7, United Nations North Lawn Building.

Women's Economic Empowerment

It's about more than access to resources ... policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks shape livelihoods and lives.

As a grantee of the MDG3 Fund: Investing in Equality by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WIEGO, a global action-research-policy network composed of researchers, organizers, and membership-based organizations of the working poor initiated the project Women's Economic Empowerment.

The project consists of six elements developed with WIEGO's partner networks and organizations:

1. **Voice for Domestic Workers** in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean
2. **Fair Trade for Women Producers** in India, Nepal, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Mexico
3. **Organized Strength for Home-Based Workers** in Thailand
4. **Market Support for Street Vendors** in South Africa
5. **Occupational Health and Safety for Working Poor Women** in Ghana, Tanzania and Cambodia
6. **Global General Assembly of Working Poor Women** in Belo Horizonte, Brazil

We invite you to find out more at: www.wiego.org



Cloth Seller in Ghana photo by Laura Allers

www.wiego.org

Addressing Crises at a Crossroads

Rosa G. Lizarde, Feminist Task Force GCAP

The UN MDG 2010 Review Summit provides the opportunity not only to critique the progress of governments in fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it also offers women's organizations the time to emphasize once again gender equality and the empowerment of women as essential to achieving sustainable human development and to underscore their importance as a means to achieving the MDGs.

The Feminist Task Force of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (FTF-GCAP) advocates for an integrated, holistic approach to the MDGs, with the fulfillment of women's rights and gender equality as an essential component of the eight goals, not simply one goal independent from the others. Likewise, in the struggle for the

eradication of poverty and inequality, the FTF takes an intersectional approach to achieving GCAPs other strategic goals of poverty eradication, climate justice, government accountability and global governance, equitable trade and aid, debt cancellation, and the achievement of peace and security (see www.whiteband.org).

At the UN MDG Review Summit 2010, the FTF will organize and co-sponsor a partnership event, a "Day of Dialogue on Women and the MDGs", approaching the day's discussion with an eye towards a cross-sectional approach, highlighting the multi-dimensional impact of the financial crisis on women, looking at the "mother of all crisis," maternal mortality, and discussing climate justice and environmental impacts on women. The results will be presented at the UN MDG Review Summit by FTF, GCAP and partner representatives at the official



The Feminist Task Force was established under the umbrella of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) in March, 2005 with the aim of placing gender equality as central to poverty eradication.

round tables of the Summit to be included as part of the MDG Breakthrough Plan.

Furthermore, the FTF will be mobilizing at the Stand Up and Take Action event on 19 September at the Lincoln Center in New York City, bringing the message of "gender equality to end poverty," and advocating for an MDG Breakthrough Plan that ensures integrated approaches to tackling the

MDGs with a focus on the interdependence of human rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability and peace and security.

Addressing Crises at a Crossroads:

A Day of Dialogue on Women & the MDGs. September 20, 2010, 9:15am-4:15pm, The Salvation Army-International Social Justice Commission Auditorium, 221 East 52nd Street New York, New York 10022.

Southern Africa Taking MDG-3 by the Horns

Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah

Malawi elected its first female vice president, South Africa women's groups launched the Red Light Campaign to say no to human trafficking, and gender quotas in Lesotho have ensured it has the highest proportion of women in local government in all of southern Africa.

These are just a few of the many achievements made by women and men in southern Africa since the adoption of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development.

These examples of the Protocol at work highlight the importance of unpacking the broad Millennium Development Goals and transferring them into more specific instruments with a regional focus.

The SADC Protocol comprises 28 time-bound targets, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and tracking progress - including reporting by member states every two years.

"There is reason to celebrate," said 'Mathabiso Lepono, Lesotho's minister of gender and youth, sports and recreation. "We are making significant progress in the areas of education where almost all SADC countries have now achieved universal primary education. In some countries there are even more women than men in tertiary education."

Lepono also credited the Protocol for helping Lesotho achieve regional success at promoting women into decision-making positions and ensuring women are used as sources in the media. "We must not let that slide," she said.

However, with only five years to go for governments to meet the Protocol's 2015 targets, activists in the region recently gave a 54% progress rating,



down a percentage point from a baseline study last year.

The 2010 SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, a tracking tool that is the annual flagship of the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance - a grouping of more than 40 NGOs that campaigned for the adoption of the Protocol in 2008 - was launched last month to assess the progress of the SADC Protocol.

Although governments filed their own reports to the SADC Secretariat for the first time this year, the Barometer is derived from country shadow reports that include a "citizen score card" and is the only overall regional analysis.

Country scores ranged from 79% in Namibia to 38% in Zimbabwe

"While there are a few bright spots on the horizon, every indicator tells us that it is still a long walk to equality for women," said Colleen Lowe Morna, executive director of Gender Links.

The Barometer raises a red flag against the fact that Mauritius and

Botswana have not signed, and only Namibia, Zimbabwe and Lesotho have ratified the Protocol.

"We need to send out a strong message to our governments that we will not accept legal technicalities as an excuse for not delivering," Lowe Morna said.

Gender Links coordinates the work of the Alliance, which has focal organisations in each country and seven theme clusters led by NGOs with expertise in constitutional and legal rights, governance, peace and conflict resolution, economic justice, gender violence, HIV and AIDS and media.

Compared to last year, the report finds that along with advances in education, there has been an increase in women's participation in economic decision-making from 18-23%.

A new chapter on peace and conflict resolution compiled by the Institute of Security Studies that leads this sector bemoans the lack of gender disaggregated data in this area, and the glaring gender gaps in the military, police and prison services of the region

Women blow vuvuzelas at Orange Farm, South Africa.

where this information exists.

The application of the Protocol in Malawi has made concrete differences on the ground there, according to NGO Gender Coordination Network Chair Emma Kaliya. Citing her organisation as an example, Kaliya said the Protocol has been used to raise the number of women in parliament from 14 to 21% in the May 2009 election.

"I can say without a doubt that the Protocol is making a difference," said Kaliya, who won the Drivers of Change award for the 50/50 Campaign.

Lowe Morna agreed, citing the regional increase of women in parliament from 13.6% in 2005 to 21.2% in 2009 as the result of the work of the 50/50 Campaign, which is guided by the Gender Protocol.

For more on the 2010 SADC Gender Protocol Barometer please visit: <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/sadc-gender-protocol-2010-barometer-2010-08-10>

Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah is the Gender Links Alliance and Partnerships Manager.

These Gender Links articles were supported by Oxfam



Gender, Media and the MDGs: Southern African Summit will Raise Tough Questions

Colleen Lowe Morna

Gender and media activists from around southern Africa and the globe will gather in Johannesburg from 12-15 October to take a hard look at why women are still glaringly absent from the media and its editorial content. The fourth Gender and Media Summit takes place against the backdrop of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) study whose provisional results, launched at the Beijing Plus Fifteen meeting in March, found that women constitute 24% of news sources (19% in Africa), up from 17% at the time of the landmark Beijing conference in 1995.

In Southern Africa, Gender Links, the Media Institute of Southern Africa and the Gender and Media Southern Africa Network are releasing a Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS) which shows that women sources have increased by a mere 2% from 17% in a regional study in 2003 to 19% at the present time. While there are variations between countries, from 30% in Lesotho to 14% in Mozambique, these findings suggest that women in the region- and globally- have yet to find their voice.

Similarly, the Glass Ceiling in Southern African newsrooms study conducted last year, which has also been conducted globally by the International Women's Media Federation, shows that women are missing in the media itself, especially at management level. The IWMF results will be released next year. In Southern Africa, the study showed that women constituted 41% of employees (32% if South Africa is excluded), but only 25% of managers.

Other than being the tenth anniversary of the MDG goals and fifteenth anniversary of Beijing, 2010 is the year that the Soccer World Cup came to Southern Africa (prompting the "Score a Goal for Gender Equality" campaign), and a significant benchmark

year for the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. The sub-regional instrument puts pressure on the media to achieve gender parity in newsrooms; give women and men equal voice; mainstream gender in media laws, policies and training; challenge gender stereotypes and report more sensitively on gender violence by 2015.

Unlike the MDGs, which do not touch at all on communication and media, the SADC Gender Protocol has specific targets and timeframes on this critical aspect of MDG 3.

The summit, which takes place every two years, has as its 2010 theme: Taking Stock: Gender, Media and Diversity. The gathering will bring together more than 200 journalists, media trainers, regulators, academics and policy makers, including key



Lesotho Minister of Gender Mathabiso Lepono being interviewed by Lesotho TV on the SADC Gender Protocol.

individuals involved in global studies. With more than 160 entries for the gender and media awards that take place on 15 October (covering content, institutional practise and leadership) participants will ask tough questions about what is working and what is not. As long as women's voices are not heard

in proportion to their strengths in the population, freedom of expression and democracy are hollow sounding phrases for half the world's population. Measured against that yardstick, Southern Africa and the world have a long way to go.

Colleen Lowe Morna is executive director of Gender Links, a Southern African NGO.

African Civil Society Re-commits to Health Targets Ahead of MDG Summit

Pooven Moodley *

Civil Society stepped up a gear and developed a common platform for action at the 15th Ordinary Summit of the African Union in Kampala, Uganda from 19-27 July 2010.

The Summit met under the theme "Maternal, Infant and Child Health and Development in Africa" and linked campaigning work in country to the AU Summit.

Various organizations, including White Ribbon Alliance, Maternal Mortality Campaign, Save the Children, Fair Play for Africa and Oxfam, worked together to put pressure on African leaders to ensure clear resolutions from the Summit to guarantee MDG targets will be met and that Maternal, Infant and Child Health was high on the agenda.

There was also a strong push to ensure that leaders did not renege on their commitments in terms of

health financing, and that the Abuja declaration was kept on the table. After a difficult battle the Heads of State recommitted to domestic financing and specifically the Abuja 15% commitment.

The Summit adopted a declaration entitled "Actions on Maternal, New Born and Child Health and Development in Africa by 2015" and reaffirmed its commitments to improve the state of health of women and children in Africa and thereby help to attain all MDGs, particularly 4, 5, and 6, by 2015.

The Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality will be rolled out across the continent. The summit also called upon member states to strengthen primary health care, reposition family planning, including reproduction health, and mitigate the human resource crisis in the health sector.

In addition to pledging to enhance sustainable financing through domestic resources mobilisation, including the 15% Abuja target, the Declaration also called on the Global Fund to Fight against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to create a new window to fund Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. After reviewing 5-years of the Abuja call for accelerated actions towards universal access to HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria services in Africa, the Summit decided to extend the Abuja call to 2015 to coincide with the MDGs.

It also requested the AU Commission, in collaboration with other organs, to revise the reporting framework and disseminate it to member states and to monitor and conduct an evaluation of the Abuja call implementation in 2013 and 2015.

** Regional Essential Services Advisor for Oxfam GB: Southern Africa*

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www.justassociates.org

End Violence and Invest in Women and Girls

A conversation with Hibaaq Osman, founder and Chair of Karama, a Cairo-based NGO working to end violence against women and girls in the Arab world.

How does Karama suggest Arab countries can reach the MDG targets by 2015?

Make all our MDGs gender-responsive, and add a target to MDG3 to end gender violence. At the national level, the governments should set indicators such as criminalizing domestic violence and reducing the number of cases, eliminating discriminatory legal codes, and lifting the reservations on CEDAW. In particular, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Egypt have shown action and results in several of these areas. Ask the ministers to include gender indicators among the performance indicators for their budgets and programs, and to collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data using national



Hibaaq Osman, Karama's Founder and Chair

NGOs with skills and expertise on the ground. This will reveal the needs of local women and men, showing which policies are missing and which are working.

Why will investing in women and girls and ending violence help achieve the MDGs?

Gender violence is a key social factor

in poverty, hunger, poor child health, unequal access to education, HIV infection, and maternal deaths - 6 of the 8 MDGs. Patterns of discrimination and violence against women threaten and undermine women's opportunities to enter the workforce as well as their success in the workplace and their access to political representation, two of the three indicators for MDG3 on promoting the empowerment of women. Investing in women and girls and ending gender violence will have a large multiplier effect across all the MDGs.

What steps can be taken by Arab states?

Women are now 40% of the workforce globally, yet account for only 28% in the Middle East and North Africa. In Egypt, for example, the majority of waged employment for women comes from the public sector rather than the private sector, so we must seek businesses to

open up greater opportunity and advancement to women. In politics, the Arab countries that have adopted quotas in parliamentary elections have helped triple women's representation in elected seats across the region from 3% to 9% since 2000, but this gain must continue being advanced. Finally, the gender gap in literacy and education must be narrowed, targeting girls to adult women.

One of the fastest ways to move progress forward on the MDGs is through gender-responsive policy and partnerships. Another is to mitigate and end armed conflict, enacting the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820. These are two instruments, along with CEDAW and the MDGs, that Karama will help governments and civil society implement in the Arab states, demonstrating that the advancement of women and girls strategically supports and accelerates the progress of all.

Visit Karama at www.el-karama.org



New budgetary allocations make work safer for women.

Nets Offer Some Safety

Joshua Kyalimpa

KAMPALA: Robinah Nabukalu sings to her three-week baby before laying her down to sleep. Both will rest easier at their house in Rubaga in Kampala under an insecticide-treated net provided by the government under a gender-sensitive budgeting effort.

"Before, I suffered frequent malaria attacks, even during my pregnancy," says Nabukalu. "Now malaria is a thing of the past, and my baby is safely protected."

Malaria is a leading cause of death in Uganda, with children under five particularly vulnerable. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that between 70,000 and 110,000 children die of malaria in this East African country each year.

Nabukalu is among those who received 17 million mosquito nets distributed free by the Ugandan government in 2009-2010. Under gender-responsive budgeting, more than seven million pregnant women were particularly included.

The non-governmental

organisation Forum for Women's Development (FOWODE) began lobbying the Ugandan government in 1999. "Gender responsive budgeting is about ensuring that government resources address the needs of both men and women," says Esther Nabwire, gender budget programme officer at FOWODE, "and I'm glad that after a lot of lobbying, the government has embraced it."

Over the past few years, Uganda has allocated a substantial part of its budget to education, health, agriculture and water, at least partly in response to gender budgeting requirements. Gender and equity guidelines are now attached to the budget circular sent out to departments and local governments.

But Nabwire says the government has not gone far enough. "The major challenge is that gender has not been prioritised: when you prioritise something, you allocate resources."

Alice Alaso is member of parliament for Soroti and

secretary-general of the opposition Forum for Democratic Change. She says the government lacks adequate knowledge about gender needs or is failing to solve specific problems.

"The government does a blanket budget on education, (but) look at the school dropouts: the rate for girls is higher than for boys."

But there are undoubted signs of targeted progress. In areas vital to levelling the playing field for women - health, education, agriculture - budgets have doubled or tripled

In agriculture, the government has set aside money to lend to women groups who make up the bulk of the workforce on the farm but find themselves marginalised by male control of land and production.

Hunger Haunts Niger

Ousseini Issa and Sabina Zaccaro

NIAMEY/ROME: More than seven million people, more than half the population of Niger that is, remains at risk of starvation despite a marginal improvement in recent days. And of that half, women are far more at risk, and far more affected by the severe shortages.

"We have launched a massive campaign to feed millions of people hit by drought, poor harvests and high food prices," World Food Programme (WFP) spokesperson Jane Howard told TerraViva. "We are focusing on the needs of women and children, who are always the most vulnerable in this kind of crisis."

Limitations in money and supplies have meant that WFP aid is directed primarily at families with children under the age of two, according to Oxfam, which distributes food for the WFP. "International systems didn't invest enough in the response," said Robert Bailey, campaigns and policy manager for Oxfam in West Africa.

It's been hard days, with women hit hardest. "Every week, we record more than 40 cases of malnutrition in our clinic," Balkissa Issa, a nurse in the eastern region of Zinder told TerraViva.

WFP is reaching out with aid to about five million people in Niger in September, as it did in August. As harvest time approaches, there are signs that the worst may be over, but women are at the centre of challenges that lie ahead.

"Part of WFP's response to the emergency in Niger is to help women farmers cope with the lean season, the time between harvests when food runs short, by setting up cereal banks," Howard said. "Small-scale farmers can borrow grain at low interest rates when food supplies are running low, then pay back the 'loan' of grain when their own harvest comes in."

WFP is also working with partners such as Care to teach women how to monitor the stocks in the warehouse and how to oversee loans for local families in need. Because many women are illiterate, they receive lessons in reading, writing and maths to help them make the food bank work. They are also taught about health, nutrition and childcare.

US Confronts its Dying Mums

Amanda Bransford

NEW YORK: The United States spends more money on healthcare than any other country in the world. It also has a higher maternal mortality rate than nearly any other highly economically developed nation, a rate higher than that of 39 other countries.

The federal government set a goal in 1998 to achieve a rate of 4.3 deaths as a result of pregnancy and childbirth per 100,000 pregnancies by 2010. This goal is far from attained: the current rate is 13.3 per 100,000, with much higher rates among minority groups. The rate in 1980 was 9.2 - significantly lower than it is today.

Part of the problem, says obstetrical nurse Melissa Hilmanowske, is the poor health of many Americans before

pregnancy. "Our obesity rate is huge. We have poor nutrition. Conditions like diabetes and preeclampsia are related to that."

Diabetes and preeclampsia are major contributors to maternal deaths. Embolism, or blood clots, is also related to obesity - and is the number one killer of women in pregnancy and childbirth.

Hilmanowske says that she has seen a dramatic increase in the number of obese patients. "Our population is getting so much bigger."

Other factors contribute to poor health, including vast numbers of Americans without health insurance. A study by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found that the maternal mortality rate among uninsured women was four times that

of women with insurance, whether private or Medicaid.

The US ranks 40th in maternal mortality, among its minorities it's much worse

Though pregnant women unable to afford insurance can apply for Medicaid, bureaucratic hurdles can slow the process, often delaying prenatal care. Even when a woman is able to obtain insurance during pregnancy, she is more likely to have received inadequate care and to be in poor health already if she was previously uninsured.

"All signs point to the condition of the mother predicting the outcome of the pregnancy," says Loretta Ross,



Obstetrical nurse Melissa Hilmanowske.

national coordinator of SisterSong, a coalition of reproductive justice advocacy groups. This year's healthcare reform bill - the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) - is expected to reduce the number of uninsured Americans by 32 million, according to Congressional Budget Office estimates.

Ross isn't entirely convinced, however, that the government's model will be effective. People will be required to purchase insurance or pay a penalty, which will be expensive for those with lower incomes.

"It probably will have a prophylactic effect, though," she says. "People will probably take the attitude that, now that I'm paying for it, I better go use it." This could lead to better health all around, and in turn better outcomes in pregnancy.

One aspect of healthcare reform that Ross does believe can reduce maternal mortality is the increase in funding by 10 billion dollars over five years for community health clinics.

These clinics are federally funded and charge based on a person's ability to pay. Many women, especially poor women, immigrants, and those in rural areas or inner cities, rely on them for care.

This provision, says Ross, "missed the headlines, but it is a win for healthcare reform." Ross adds, however, that the funding may not be enough to fill the large need.

Women Six Times More at HIV Risk

Susan Anyangu-Amu

NAIROBI: It's been clear for some time that AIDS is hitting women harder than men.

But it could be getting worse: in Kenya government figures show young women aged 15-24 are six times more likely to be HIV-positive than their male counterparts. Other figures suggest that at least 60 percent of people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women.

Some of the factors are familiar, such as lack of economic independence, and social factors that mean women are frequently unable to insist their sexual partners use condoms.

"Our prevention strategies need to specifically address the unique situations they (women) find themselves in," says Professor Alloys Orago of Kenya's National AIDS Control Council. "We need to focus on women and young girls who are out of school."

Pascaline Kang'ethe, national coordinator for rights to health and HIV/AIDS with the international anti-



poverty group ActionAid says the focus should shift to helping women and girls learn to defend their rights.

"Women and girls do not have equal access to information and education, job opportunities and resources - including time to secure health, legal and other services. This exclusion means they cannot engage with their community in influencing activities that can significantly affect their lives."

ActionAid is using a methodology known as STAR (societies tackling AIDS through rights). "In Bondo district we are working with women living with HIV and we have trained them in carrying out social audits. We want communities to organise into pressure

groups - to support each other and become empowered with knowledge on rights so that they can demand action from the government."

In Garissa in the north-east, Kang'ethe says a circle of women successfully pushed for a generator to be installed in the operation theatre of the district hospital.

Lawyer Njoki Ndung'u says HIV infection also needs to be fought in the legal arena. "A lot has been done in terms of medical intervention and behavioural change. It is time to go to the law to change the gender status and address these vulnerabilities from the root causes."

Kenya's new constitution outlaws harmful practices that fuel the spread of HIV. Ndung'u proposes that HIV/AIDS advocacy groups assist women whose rights have been violated to demand redress. "As civil society organisations working with women living with HIV/AIDS, you can now launch class actions against the government on behalf of these women."

In Brazil, California and Cambodia, women take the helping hand – for a bit – to lift themselves to better work. TerraViva snapshots from these very different places point to striking similarities in ways women may have to struggle on their way to decent employment



Guillermina Castellanos (far right) and other members of the Women's Collective Protest for the rights of domestics.

Hannah Pallmeyer - courtesy of La Raza Centro Legal

With a Little Help From Friends

TerraViva Correspondents *

RIO DE JANEIRO: "There are no ceilings in our dreams; we want to transform young women, tell them there is a way for them to be happy," says Elza Santiago. Santiago, 49, and Marinalva Alves, 44, live in Morro da Coroa, one of the favelas that line the steep hills of Rio de Janeiro.

But for poor black women like Santiago and Alves, the hills to climb are even steeper, because of racial prejudice deep-rooted in Brazil, "even though they pretend it doesn't exist," Santiago tells TerraViva at their workshop in the favela, where they sew and do embroidery work.

"Who hires an unskilled black woman over 40? That's why we decided to join forces to support ourselves."

That was through the Bordadeiras da Coroa (Embroiderers of Coroa) cooperative. But in 2006 the ELAS Social Investment Fund gave the cooperative 2,500 dollars to buy two sewing machines, fabrics and other materials. The cooperative's products took off, and were even included in the Fashion Rio show.

Since then, demand for their garments, handbags, tablecloths, towels, quilts, t-shirts and other

products has not stopped growing. The average monthly income of each member has soared from 50 dollars to 700 dollars.

In San Francisco, La Raza Centro Legal's Women's Collective teaches members, mostly undocumented immigrant women who work in private households, how to negotiate for decent wages and for safe, dignified working conditions.

The centre has a Day Labour Programme where employers can hire experienced workers with just one day advance notice.

"Because I care for their children, both my employers are able to work full-time, but I struggle to buy groceries for my family and pay rent each month," says Reina Flamenco, a member of the collective.

"But," Castellanos warns, "outside the organisation, many domestic workers are more likely to be exploited." According to the centre, two-thirds of domestics in California earn low wages, or wages below the poverty line.

There are roughly 2.5 million domestic employees in the United States, nearly all of whom are immigrant women. They have little protection, the exception being the state of New York

where on Aug. 31 Governor David Paterson signed into law the first extensive domestic workers' rights measure in the nation, guaranteeing a minimum wage, overtime pay, sick days, one day off a week, and three paid days off a year.

Domestics around the world may soon have an instrument to protect them from such abuses if the ILO approves an international convention in 2011 for protection of the rights of domestic workers.

Wages some consider acceptable are never enough

Chen Reaksmeay wants to be a role model. She moved to Cambodian capital Phnom Penh when she was just 15, hoping to support her poor family back home. She found work in a karaoke parlour, part of this Southeast Asian nation's high-risk entertainment industry, which often includes sex work.

By 22, she was regularly smoking highly addictive ice, or crystal methamphetamine. "A friend said, 'Take some of this. It can make you work all night'," Chen recalls. "It gave me energy. And it helped me forget all the painful

things."

Her life began to change when she met workers with Korsang, a local non-governmental organisation that works on harm reduction and HIV-prevention for people with drug addictions.

As she gradually decreased her drug use, she started volunteering as a peer educator. "At first I thought it was kind of crazy and not worth my time," Chen tells TerraViva. "But then I saw all these women using drugs. I thought, what if I could change their lives?"

Chen did not fully change her own life until she finally stopped smoking ice entirely three years ago, when she was pregnant with her second child.

Now Chen is the head of Korsang's women's programme. It's the only programme geared toward female drug users in a country that has few treatment and rehabilitation options.

"I used to smoke. I used to work at night just like them. Now, I have a family and a good job," says Chen. "I want to raise their self-esteem. I want to be a role model."

**Reporting by Fabiana Frayssinet in Rio de Janeiro, Aprille Muscara in New York, and Irwin Loy in Phnom Penh.*

Violence Hits Behind the News

Daniela Pastrana

MEXICO CITY: Amalia is an indigenous Maya girl from a rural community in southern Quintana Roo, on Mexico's Caribbean coast. She is 11, and in August became the youngest mother in the country when she gave birth to a baby girl, 51 cm long and just under three kilograms.



Paula Flores with her grandchild. She has struggled long for justice after her daughter Sagrario was murdered.

Amalia was raped when she was 10, allegedly by her stepfather. She did not have the option of terminating the pregnancy because when detected it was too late for legal abortion.

Her case highlights the government's failures in dealing with violence against girls, overlooked due to the many other types of violence plaguing Mexico, such as the epidemic of drug-related murders, and the human rights violations attributed to the military and police.

Amalia "represents an

accumulation of social exclusions: she is female, a child, indigenous and poor," Juan Martín Pérez, executive director of the Network for Children's Rights in Mexico, which brings together more than 50 pro-child organisations, told TerraViva.

In this Latin American country of 108 million people, there are 18.4 million boys and 17.9 million girls under 18. Violence against children occurs in one-third of households.

A UNICEF study ranked Mexico second for mistreatment of children, after Portugal, among the 33 member

countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). According to UNICEF, a large portion of this physical, sexual and psychological violence and neglect remains hidden, and is sometimes socially accepted.

Secretary of health Juan Carlos Azueta says 5,500 adolescent pregnancies were reported last year in Quintana Roo state, 16 percent of which were the result of rape - in line with the national average.

According to Mexico's National Institute on Statistics and Geography,

180,500 adolescent mothers, ages 12 to 18, have not completed their basic education. Girls have higher school attendance rates than boys until age 16, when the balance starts to tip, in part due to early pregnancy.

In some Mexican states, the laws are tougher on women who undergo abortions than on the rapists who impregnated them. According to government surveys, more than 60 percent of male adolescents believe it is solely the responsibility of the woman to take precautions against pregnancy.

UNiTY Rises Against Violence

Chris Stein

JOHANNESBURG: The Unifem campaign 'Say No – UNITE to End Violence Against Women' has set off campaigns right across Africa.

In Sudan, a growing number of reported cases of child rape have prompted public support for changes to the country's laws on sexual assault.

"Society will take a step towards social change and justice," says Fatima Hashim, director of the Salmah Women's Resource Centre in Khartoum, and leader of the 149 Alliance, a coalition of civil society groups named after the article of Sudan's penal code they are working to change. "It will enable women to take the cases to court and punish the criminals."

Sudanese law defines rape as non-consensual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not married to each other. This exposes women laying rape charges to being found guilty of adultery if they are unable to prove to a judge that the sex was not consensual - many judges require four male witnesses to convict on a rape charge.

In Rwanda, the government has already taken steps

to reduce gender-based violence and care for survivors. "Police and prosecutors are slowly succeeding in tackling criminal cases related to gender-based violence," says Angelique Habyarimana, inspector in the prosecutor-general's office who investigates domestic and sexual violence.

The government has also established the Isange Centre in capital Kigali to provide shelter and counseling for victims of domestic violence, child abuse or sexual assault. Grace Igraneza, coordinator of the centre, says it is important to help survivors of rape and other gender violence to come to terms with their experience.

In the Seychelles, UNIFEM has responded to a government request to monitor increasing domestic violence. It is also undertaking a similar survey in the Comoros.

Several million African women and girls are at risk of genital mutilation, while hundreds of thousands of women and children in slums like Nairobi's Kibera risk rape each night they venture outside to use the toilet. Many women are no safer in their homes: every six hours, a South African woman is killed by an intimate partner.

TERRAVIVA



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